



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Pool Project Update:



Pool Facility Renovation Continues

By Alan Proctor, Contract Officer and Council member



Framing for Footings of Pavilion Basement Walls.

The pool facility renovation project has entered a tricky phase in the project where wet, cold weather and continuing problems with “**bad soils**” that have required additional excavation and foundation preparation work have used up much of the slack that was built into the original project schedule. These soils have been excavated and removed off site and have been replaced with stone. The process took some

additional time and came at the worst period of the year, during the holiday season. At the January Council meeting, contractor **Jerry Therrien** said the project is behind where it had planned to be. However, the firm remains committed to completing the project on time, and the Council is providing oversight on at least a bi-weekly basis.

The good news is that there is typically less risk with work above ground, and we will be less subject to bad weather once the roof is completed in the next month. Concrete footings are complete and masonry walls are being installed. This means that we will be “**out of the ground**” for the new pool house building by the end of the month, when work on the aboveground portion of the structure itself will begin. **Geert Visscher**, **Therrien Waddell's** project manager for this effort, points out that, “*as with all construction projects, the most critical milestone is to get the structure out of the ground. We can see the finish line for this phase of the project. After that, progress of the work over the next month will be much more visible and should be very satisfying to many when we see the building framing go up and the roof installed on the building.*”

Other good news: after several months of administrative procedures at the **Park and Planning Commission**, we’re also close to having the final permits we need to replace some portions of the pool deck that were in bad condition and to

make the planned improvements on both sides of the stream to better manage storm water runoff.



Piers and Stone Walls for West Porch, wall, and Planter.

Over the past month, the following work has been completed:

- **Application of field stone** for the new planter and is wrapping up at the new BBQ station
- **Concrete footings** for the new basement addition
- **Structural concrete column** has been installed to serve as support

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Calendar

Sunday, January 30

Sing-a-Long

Monday, February 7

Council Meeting

Monday, February 28

MVA Mobile Office

Don't forget to check the Town website throughout the month for an up-to-date calendar. Go to www.townofsomerset.com and click on **Town Calendar**.



On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Let's Resolve To Be More Civil

The recent tragic event in Tucson and resulting national discourse taught us a number of lessons about civility in our country. While I truly wish the talk had been more relevant to the tragedy, with a focus on better mental health programs and laws, nevertheless, we can apply this new knowledge to our own public conversations, especially related to our **Town-sponsored list_serv** and **comments at public meetings**.

There is no doubt that we are a highly educated bunch here with lots of advanced degrees and specialized training. We are excellent researchers, and many of us are real experts in our fields. Yet when a hot topic comes before the public, too often communications on the list_serv turn rancorous. Comments are made that reflect an **"I know it all"** attitude rather than something to add to the discussion. Granted, this is common when it comes to this kind of posting, and I hear complaints all the time from friends in surrounding and nearby communities. However, it is my hope that Somerset can do better than the rest. The same can be said frequently about remarks made during public meetings.

President Obama said recently, **"there is a lot more that unites us than divides us,"** and I hope folks will remember that in the future. As I wrote in a column last year, **it's all about respect**.

Please, I do not want to censor anyone's free speech or force anyone to sacrifice principles. And I am sure that some of the things I have said or written have not always been appropriate, correct, or interpreted the way I wanted them to be. However, I feel that all of us in the elected government today act in what we feel are the best interests of the citizens and the Town.

Let's be sure that one of our **New Year's resolutions** is to be more thoughtful and kind when talking or writing in public. We can be a model of civility for our region and our nation.



Be a Model of Civility

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Maxine Finkelstein, Editor

Deadline for ads and copy is the 15th of the month at 4:30 p.m.



Sidewalk Clearing

By Bill Farley, Council member

On **February 7, 2011**, the Town Council will consider changing the sidewalk clearing policy currently in effect. Currently, **Somerset sidewalks** are **cleared** of snow and, if necessary, **sanded** whenever there is an accumulation of **two inches** of snow.

There are **173 houses** in the Town with sidewalks. This year the Town spent almost **\$4,000 (\$37.50 per person-hour)** to clear the sidewalks for our one snowfall in **early December**. Last year, the Town spent more than **\$70,000** to clear the sidewalks, a total of more than **\$420 per house** with a sidewalk. The Town did receive some funds from the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** for both the **December 2009** and **February 2010** storms.

However, there are new regulations promulgated by FEMA, which will **limit reimbursement** for snow-clearing operations to situations that exceed the snow fall total of the **February 2010** snow event. It is likely that the Town **will not be eligible** for FEMA reimbursement in the future.

As it stands, residents are currently responsible for shoveling their **own walkways and driveways**. The Council is considering changing **Town Code Section 4-103** by raising the standard of when the contractor will shovel the public sidewalks from the **current two inches** to instances where there is a **four-inch or more accumulation**. This would likely **save** the Town **thousands of dollars**.

If residents do not feel comfortable shoveling even two inches of snow, there is a directory of Somerset young people listed in **"Odd Job Helpers"** that comes with the Journal every three months.

The Council is seeking comments from residents. There are a number of possibilities other than the four-inch rule. The Town could continue with shoveling for two inches or more, shovel for four inches or more, or **not shovel** at all. Not shoveling would put the responsibility back on individual homeowners to clear their own sidewalks for accumulation of two inches or more.

To voice your input, please send an email to the Council members at **Council@townofsomerset.com**.

Permits Granted



The Mayor issued the following permits during the past month. (Building permits are approved by the Town Council.)

Tree Permits

Belkacem and **Maud Abdeslem** requested the removal of a **17" Colorado blue spruce**, located at 5406 Greystone Street. Town Arborist recommended tree for removal. Tree is losing lower limbs due to canker and the multiple leaders make the tree susceptible to splitting. Tree was recommended for removal because it was hazardous and diseased.

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Sing Along with Us

By Cathy Pickar, Council member



Food, Follies and Song

Help us start a tradition: who knows

where it could go from here? **Writers, actors, singers, directors, costumers, performers**, join us in shaping a tradition, **Somerset's Winter Light follies**.

The **"Sometimes Somerset Singers"** is hosting its quasi-follies, quasi-sing-along, and social event on **Sunday, January 30 at 4:00 p.m. at Town Hall**. There is no admission fee, but reservations are required.

Join in on **"Once You're On the List Serve"** to the tune of **"Once in Love with Amy"** from the Broadway musical **Where's Charley**; and, for those of you familiar with **Gilbert and Sullivan**, we have our own **"Little List"** of folks **"who might be missed."** Or join us in some rounds; take your choice: **Paul Revere, Valentine, or Epitaph** from **Guys and Dolls**. And who could resist singing harmony on **"Teach Your Children"** with our own **David Bates** performing on guitar.

We hope that you will come to listen, to sing, and to laugh with us at this **first Somerset Winter Light celebration**. In addition, bring your ideas for turning this event into an annual tradition that the entire community celebrates together.

Space is limited due to fire regulations. It is essential that you let us know if you plan to attend. **To reserve seat(s), please send an email to Somerset Singers@yahoo.com**, giving your name and the number of people who will be attending, or call **Jeanette Kreiser** at **301-907-0760** to reserve your seat(s).

Be sure to bring the e-mail you receive confirming your reservation.



Stone Being Applied to New Barbeque on the West Porch.

for the new elevated slab of the West Porch, in conjunction with the new concrete block foundation walls that are currently being erected and will be completed by mid-January

- **New elevated slab** over the pool equipment room has been installed and is currently being prepped for rough-in of utilities
- **New wading pool** has been excavated and the plumbing rough-in installed
- **Electrical rough** in for under slab conduit runs are underway

The following work is planned for the coming month:

- **Rebar support** and **cement shell** of the pool
- **Under-slab** and **perimeter foundation** drainage
- **Waterproofing** of the foundation walls
- **Backfilling** for the basement wall addition
- **Installation of steel** framing
- **Installation of wood** framing
- **Installation of wood** trusses and roofing
- **Installation of interior masonry** partitions
- **Rough-in of utilities** in interior partitions
- **Wiring infrastructure** for the entire building

For more information and pictures on the project, please see the project website linked from the Town website, or directly accessible at <http://townofsomerset.proctors.us>.

News From the Swim Team

By Sarah Morse, Dorset Avenue

It's never too early to start thinking about summer. The swim season will be upon us before you know it. **Mark your calendar so you will not miss a single day of the Somerset Dolphin's swim season!**

What is the Somerset Swim Team? For those new to the neighborhood, the swim team is Somerset's only Town sponsored sports team. The team is open to all Town residents **18 and under** regardless of their ability. **No tryouts!** We are part of the **Montgomery County Swim League** and have meets every **Saturday morning** and **Wednesday night** from **June 22** through **July 23**. While swimming is an important part of the team, we also have a lot of fun. Besides the meets, we have **weekly social events** such as **dessert contests**, **laser tag**, **spending the night at the pool**, and **spaghetti dinners**. There is also a developmental team, **the Minis**, for kids **age 4 to 7** who can swim at least **15 yards**. These younger swimmers practice **three half-hour sessions a week** and have only one meet.

Practice starts in the afternoon on **May 31 (Monday-Friday 4:00-5:00 p.m.; 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)**. We have only three weeks to get everyone in the water, legal, and more before the first meet on **June 18**. Morning practice begins **June 17 at 8:30 a.m.**, and kids can come to both practices or chose between the two. The season ends on **July 23** this year with the **Divisional Championships** in the morning and the team banquet the same evening. All Star events are the following weekend.

The Dolphins are in the **K Division** for 2011, seeded third and swimming on **Saturdays** against **Kenmont, Norbeck Grove, Old Farm, Manor Woods, and Quail Valley**. On **Wednesday nights**, we swim **Little Falls, Mohican, and CCRA**, as well as hosting the very popular **B relay carnival** on **July 22**.

Sadly, this is the **last of my newsletter entries**. I have **retired from the Team Rep position** and am happy to turn the job over to **Ann Brown**. Ann is the new Team Rep, making sure that the team runs smoothly and everyone is where he or she needs to be. She will be assisted by **A Reps, Maura Vanderzon** and **Amy Powers**, who will run the Saturday meets, and **B Reps, Rebecca Pilot** and **Kristen Khanna**, who will run the Wednesday night meets. **Thank you** to everyone for your support over the past years. It has been so much fun.

So, when you are making your summer plans, leave some time for the swim team. Whether you're here for three weeks or the whole season; whether you can practice three times a week or every day, we want you on the team. You can't have a community team without the community participating. For more information, call at **301-633-4193** or email **Ann Brown** at abrown@annbrowncommunications.com.



Swim Team News

Latest News From Town Hall

By Josh Russin, Clerk-Treasure



Tax season is approaching—remember: 'TOWN OF SOMERSET'!

Somerset's largest source of revenue is a portion of the State income tax paid by Town residents. Unfortunately, Somerset will not get its share of income taxes unless its name appears

on the Maryland income tax form in the box marked, "City, Town or Taxing Area." Please do not forget to complete this section when filing your taxes.



Snow and Town Sidewalks

The Town of Somerset would like to remind residents to clear the sidewalk **in front** or on **the side** of your property if it snows **less than two inches**. The Town will clear sidewalks and pathways if it snows more than two inches. Because of public comments and environmental considerations, the Town or its contractor will **no longer spread salt, sand, or**

deicers on sidewalks and paths, as has been the policy of the Town since 2002.

If the forecast calls for snow, please park your cars off the streets so the plows and crews can safely clear our streets.

2011 User Fees

The **Mayor and Council** have not set the **tennis court, batting cage, and swimming pool user fees** for the 2011 calendar year. These fees will be set in the next couple of months.



Town Arborist Monitors the Health of Somerset's Trees

Many residents had an opportunity to meet the newly hired Town Arborist, **Dr. Tolbert Feather**. Dr. Feather was hired in the fall as a consultant to provide independent advice about

our trees. Dr. Tolbert continues the work of former Town Arborist **Barb Neal**. Dr. Feather reviews tree removal requests, building permit applications for trees impacted by the project, diagnosis for tree pruning, and maintenance.

Dr. Feather has recently completed a tree survey for the Town. The survey included a review of the unnumbered Town trees located in **Vinton Park**, which borders properties along **Warwick Avenue, Lower Trent, Uppingham Street, Dorset Avenue, and Capello Park**. The survey helps the Town understand the condition of our trees.

Dr. Feather received his Ph.D. in **Plant Pathology** from the **University of California, Riverside**, and is a licensed **Tree Expert, Arborist, and Pesticide Applicator**. He is also a consultant for the **Town of Chevy Chase, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority**, and many other companies. He continues to work on residential and commercial projects.

Somerset Journal and Weekly E-Blast



We would like to encourage as many residents as possible to receive their **Somerset Journal electronically**.

As a **Tree City USA** and a **PLANT Maryland Community**, Somerset wants to reduce its impact on the environment by encouraging residents to receive their copy of the Town Journal by email. If you are not currently on the Town Journal email distribution list and would like to receive an electronic copy, please contact Town Hall at clerk@townofsomerset.com or at 301-657-3211. Please let us know if you would like to receive the weekly e-blast.

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By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

It is my hope that Town will continue to enjoy our many blessings with continued success in the **New Year**. I have attended events this month to celebrate the inauguration of new terms for the **Governor, Comptroller, and Attorney General**, and I was in **Annapolis** the day the new legislature was sworn in. I also attended **DC festivities** for **Mayor Gray**. It is important for the Town to be at the table when policies and laws are being considered, and it is helpful for all

these folks to know us.

In the next few weeks, I will schedule an opportunity for **Council members** and I to meet with the **fourth graders** at **Somerset Elementary School** to introduce the **Maryland Municipal League** sponsored **essay-writing contest**, which has a deadline of **April 1**. I also want to publicize the opportunity for the **Town 4th graders** who attend private and parochial schools. A poster is on display at **Town Hall** and details are available on the **MML website**.

Two former Somerset residents who also happened to be poets, **Ann Darr** and **Betty Parry**, are the subject of literary programs at the **Friendship Heights Village Center**. The first one will take place **February 7**. A nonprofit group called **The Word Works** published poems by each former resident and will be putting on the program. Some of you may have heard about this from **Lucky Marmon** (Cumberland) who knows the group and has posted some information about it on the **list_serv**. **The Town of Somerset Community Fund** will be the financial sponsor in its initial effort to help local organizations.

Last month I received a notice about a **new dog park** that just opened on **Newark Street, NW**, in **McLean Gardens**. While it is my understanding that **Montgomery County** would like to put such a park in the lower County, it appears it won't happen in the near future due to **budget constraints**, and the County's dog parks are quite far away. As there are many, many active dog owners in Town, I suggest we put a group together to go to the new one on a regular basis, since it's so close. It will give us yet another opportunity to get to know one another better and most importantly, to share stories and ideas to improve our dogs' lives and health.

I am so pleased that the Council gave its approval to the request of the **Avon Foundation** to use **Capello Park** as a pit stop during their march against **breast cancer**, which takes place in the spring. While there will potentially be a small burden on Town residents who may want to use the park that day, our Town is already on the route, so the addition of this particular stop will have minimal impact. In addition, this is a nice way to help a nonprofit working on an issue of vital importance to so many residents, while having virtually no impact on our budget.

Latest News from page 5



Calendars

2011 League of Women Voters calendars are available at the Town Hall.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in **Friendship Heights** on **Monday, February 28** from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Legislation

At the January 3 meeting, the Council passed Town Code amendments that brought Somerset Code Chapter 8, Protection of Trees, Section 8-204 (a)(5); the diameter of trees that are measured for protection consistent with existing language found in the Code. Amendment goes into effect February 15, 2011.

Council Activity

January 13, 2011 – Special Council Agenda

Pool house renovation project:

Authorize the Mayor to sign documents related to pool project, including:

- Category One, Part II easement placed on Town property
- Approval of Forest Conservation Plan.
- Adjournment – 3:23 p.m.

January 13, 2011 – Special Council Agenda

Pool house renovation project:

Authorize the Mayor to sign documents related to pool project, including:

- Stormwater management easement to Montgomery County
- Allowing Montgomery County right to maintain system and retain access to area.
- Adjournment – 9:45 p.m.

January 24, 2011 – Special Council Agenda

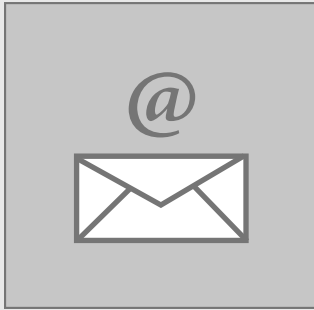
Pool house renovation project – 6:45 p.m.

Subjects to be covered could include:

- Comparison of project progress to project plan
- Change order approvals
- Recording costs and effect of change orders on timeline
- Keeping track of the project's budget
- Update on unsuitable soils
- Update on foundation and wading pool
- Update on project completion date
- Adjournment – 7:45 p.m.

February 7, 2011

Work Session of Town Council – 7:00 p.m.



A Note From the Editor

Somerset prides itself in striving to be a green community, with awareness of what we can all do to preserve and protect our environment. We are also concerned about our budget and continuing to provide the best services for our residents and community.

I feel it is time for us to look toward the advances made in the recent past and to go forward into this millennium embracing the best of what technology has to offer.

Most organizations communicate with their members online. Their newsletters, bulletins, announcements, and other correspondence are delivered electronically by email. Our Town is very late in our acceptance of this medium.

The cost to the Town for printing and mailing is very high. The Council and residents have regular discussions about the costs of services and how the Town must cut back and reduce what it has provided in the past. The unnecessary cost of printing and mailing can be nearly eliminated by using email to deliver the monthly Journal. The cost to the Town to email the Journal is minimal, and those who must have a paper copy could print one at home or have one printed at the Town Hall.

I am convinced the time has come for Somerset to adopt this technology, save ourselves significant money, and make a positive contribution to the environment, all at once.

The **ad hoc Communications Committee**, comprised of **Barbara Zeughauser, Diane Horn, Barbara Marenus, Jeffrey Slavin, and Maxine Finkelstein** is continuing to discuss this. Please make your opinion known to the Council, the Clerk-Treasurer, or the Committee.

A Note From the Editor



Stanley Baldinger requested the removal of a **30' blue spruce**, located at 5533 Warwick Place. Town Clerk-Treasurer recommended tree for removal. Tree toppled onto house and was completely uprooted and created hazardous conditions.

Richard and Deborah Furcolo requested the removal of a **12" Northern Red Oak tree**, located at 4803 Grantham Avenue. Town Arborist recommended tree for removal. **Seventy-five percent** of the tree is dead with decay in the top leader. Tree was recommended for removal because it was hazardous.

Brian Graham requested the removal of a **26.5" Bradford Pear** and a **27" Bradford Pear**, located at 4728 Dorset Avenue. Town Arborist recommended trees for removal. Both trees are beginning to split apart within the main trunks. Trees were recommended for removal because they are hazardous.

George Schlossberg requested the removal of a **4.5' Colorado Spruce**, located at 5412 Trent Street. Town Arborist recommended tree for removal. Tree was planted too close to house and is growing into the house. Applicant installed previously planned new landscaping in front of and on the side of the house, including two small evergreens and one crape myrtle that serves as replacement trees.

Portable Storage Unit Permit

David Kass and Iris Amdur requested an extension to their portable storage unit permit at 5701 Warwick Place. The Mayor authorized the permit for an additional **30 days**. The permit expires on **February 10, 2011**.

Fence or Wall Permits

Dina and Marvin Levine requested the installation of a **5' tall red cedar western rail fence** with lattice and gate located at 4807 Falstone Avenue. The permit expires on **December 18, 2011**.

Nicolas Lloreda and Alessandra Tassara requested the installation of an **18" stone seat wall** at the patio in the middle of the rear yard located at 4813 Falstone Avenue. The permit expires on **January 6, 2012**.

George Schlossberg requested the installation of a **14" high knee wall**. Applicant will follow tree protection plan as stated in Town Arborist report. Permit expires **December 17, 2011**.



Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, February 7, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

Regular Meeting of Town Council

1. Approve the minutes of the January 3, 2011 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Approve the minutes of the January 13, 2011 special meeting – 7:33 p.m.
3. Approve the minutes of the January 13, 2011 special meeting – 7:36 p.m.
4. Approve the minutes of the January 24, 2011 special meeting – 7:39 p.m.
5. Discussion of financial report – 7:40 p.m.
6. Update on pool house renovation project – 7:55 p.m.*
7. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8:10 p.m.
8. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by Sherry Bindeman and David Kahn, 4715 Essex Avenue, to install an emergency generator at the residence – 8:20 p.m.
9. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by Nicole Totah & Josh Rosenthal, 5409 Surrey Street, to fill in gap between the house and the addition and enclose existing front porch – 8:30 p.m.
10. Fact-finding hearing and action on previously approved application submitted by Catherine Pickar, 4915 Dorset Avenue, to install an emergency generator at the residence – 8:40 p.m.
11. Action on reappointment of John Sullivan & Phyllis Wiesenfelder to the Town Board of Supervisors of Elections – 8:50 p.m.
12. Action on resolution allowing Helping Hand use of the Town Hall for a “Social Hour” during power outages – 8:55 p.m.
13. Introduction of amendment to Town of Somerset Code Chapter 2, Administration and Procedures, Section 2-402(i) allowing the Council to set the Journal advertising fee by resolution – 9:05 p.m.
14. Introduction of amendment to Town of Somerset Code Chapter 8, Protection of Trees, Section 8-204, establishing a fee to process and review tree permits – 9:15 p.m.
15. Introduction of amendment to Town of Somerset Code Chapter 4, Section 4-103, raising the amount of snowfall accumulation on sidewalks in front and on the side of properties when a Town contractor will remove the snow, from two to four inches – 9:25 p.m.*
16. Public hearing and action on amendment to Town of Somerset Code Chapter 5, Parks and Natural Resources Committee, Section 5-901 (a), (b), (c), (d) – 9:35 p.m.
17. Action on resolution calling for the Montgomery County Executive and the Montgomery County Council to continue to distribute income tax receipts from County residents who live in municipalities – 9:40 p.m.
18. Mayor’s report – 9:45 p.m.
19. Adjournment – 9:50 p.m.



left to right: Council members Bill Farley, Barbara Zeughauser, Cathy Pickar, Vice President Marne Shaul, Alan Proctor

This is a preliminary agenda prepared to meet the Journal press deadline, which typically is two weeks prior to the next Town Council meeting. During this period, there will likely be changes to the timing of items, and some items may be added or deleted. Please consult the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch or the Town website for the most up-to-date agenda.

Residents who wish to be present for a particular agenda item are advised to arrive 15 minutes ahead of the item’s scheduled discussion time as discussions sometimes run ahead of schedule

Items marked * have related articles inside this issue of the Town Journal.